

REMARKS

In the December 11, 2007 Office Action, claims 1-22 were objected to and claims 1-5 and 7-22 stand rejected in view of prior art, while claim 6 was withdrawn for being directed to a non-elected embodiment. No other objections or rejections were made in the Office Action.

Status of Claims and Amendments

In response to the December 11, 2007 Office Action, Applicants have amended claims 1, 17, and 21, and have cancelled claims 7-9 and 14-16, as indicated above. Further, Applicants have amended claim 13 to conform to the spelling used in the written disclosure, and have added claims 23-30. Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the examination of this application. Thus, claims 1-6, 10-13, and 17-30 are pending, with claims 1 and 17 being the only independent claims. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested in view of above amendments and the following comments.

Interview Summary

On March 6, 2008, the undersigned spoke via telephone with Examiner Johnson, who is in charge of the above-identified patent application. During the conversation, the undersigned indicated that Applicants wished to amend the independent claims and to add claims, and inquired whether this would result in the raising of new issues. Since it was stated that it would, this Amendment is being filed with an RCE in order to ensure consideration. Applicants wish to thank Examiner Johnson for the opportunity to discuss the above-identified patent application.

Claim Objections

In item 1 of the Office Action, claims 1-22 were objected to due to an informality. In response, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 17 to delete "in a rotational direction" and have added the adverb -- rotatably -- to claim that the damper mechanism elastically rotatably connects the flywheel to the crankshaft.

Applicants believe that the claims are now correct. Withdrawal of the objections is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §112

In item 3 of the Office Action, claims 21 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph for insufficient antecedent basis. In response, Applicants have amended claim 21 to depend on claim 10, which recites a fix member.

Applicants believe that the claims now comply with 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

In item 4 of the Office Action, claims 1-22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,842,116 (Fukushima). In response, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 17 and have cancelled claims 7-9 and 14-16 as mentioned above.

Specifically, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 17 to recite that the flywheel has a clutch friction surface that frictionally engages and disengages a clutch disk.

In the Office Action, Applicants respectfully assert that the flywheel of Fukushima is identified as 32 and 36. However, referring to Figured 3 and 3b of Fukushima, Applicants respectfully assert that the flywheel 32 is not elastically connected to the crankshaft by the damper mechanism as claimed. Thus, Applicants respectfully assert that the flywheel 32 does not correspond to the flywheel of claims 1 and 17 of the present application.

With regards to the flywheel 36 of Fukushima, referring to Figured 3 and 3b of Fukushima, Applicants respectfully assert that the flywheel 36 does not frictionally engage or disengage the clutch disk 35 as claimed.

Applicants respectfully assert that the recited structure is not disclosed or suggested by the prior art of record. It is well settled under U.S. patent law that for a reference to anticipate a claim, the reference must disclose each element of the claim within the reference. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 and 17 are not anticipated by the prior art of record. Withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

Moreover, Applicants believe that the dependent claims are also allowable over the prior art of record in that they depend from independent claims 1 and 17, and therefore are allowable for the reasons stated above. Also, the dependent claims are further allowable because they include additional limitations. Thus, Applicants believe that since the prior art of record does not anticipate the independent claims 1 and 17, neither does the prior art anticipate the dependent claims.

Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections.

New Claims - 23-30

Applicants have added new claims 23-30, which depend on claims 1 and 17. Applicants believe that dependent claims 23-30 are also allowable over the prior art of record in that they depend from independent claims 1 and 17, and therefore are allowable for the reasons stated above. Also, the dependent claims are further allowable because they include additional limitations.

Examination and consideration are respectfully requested.

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Amendment dated March 7, 2008
Reply to Office Action of December 11, 2007

In view of the foregoing amendment and comments, Applicants respectfully assert that claims 1-6, 10-13, and 17-30 are now in condition for allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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